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# BLACK & WHITE

February 17, 2005

~ An Independent Publication ~

Volume 1, Issue 2

## AMERICA'S NEXT DOMESTIC DISPUTE

### Defending the Constitution against inequality

BY: THE LEFT

A young woman growing up in the Midwest disowned by her family because she is a lesbian moves away to the Northeast and falls in love with a caring woman and commits her life to her partner. Fifteen years later, that woman, now a successful attorney who contributes her time and money to a local homeless shelter is hit by a drunk driver on her way home from work. She is in a persistent vegetative state with no hope for recovery. Years ago she told her partner in casual conversation that she would never want to live as a vegetable.

Because she is not married and her partnership is not recognized under the principles of common law, the only people who can act on her behalf are the parents who threw her out 15 years ago. Her partner, the woman she has confided in for years, has no rights to visitation, let alone the legal right to make medical decisions on her behalf.

This is a completely hypothetical situation, but one not unfathomable. Place yourself in the same situation. Who would you trust with matters of life and death in your state of incapacitation? You're intolerant, loathing parents or the person you love?

Gay marriage was put on the political agenda several years ago when Vermont sanctioned legal civil unions between same-sex couples. Since that precedent-setting occasion (one hidden from cameras behind the closed doors of the Vermont statehouse), courts and gay-rights activists have accelerated the movement toward ending the only socially-acceptable form of discrimination

that remains.

The movement, though, did not come without consequence. Putting such a divisive issue on the political platform during a presidential election

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### Defending Marriage under Canadian Fire

BY: THE RIGHT

First it was the British loyalists who sought refuge in Canada after the successful campaign of Washington's Continental Army. Then came the fugitive slaves riding the Underground Railroad away

from slavery. Following them were the draft dodgers. Most recently, zealous Bush-bashers joined the exodus. And now, in early 2005, it seems that another American demographic might soon be crossing the 49th parallel in search of their own Canadian haven—homosexuals.

On February 1, the Canadian Minister of Justice, Irwin Cotler, introduced same-sex marriage legislation into the federal parliament. Bill C-38, the *Civil Marriage Act* looks to redefine "marriage, for civil purposes," as "the lawful union of two persons to the exclusion of all others." Secondly, it grants religious officials the freedom to refuse performing marriages "that are not in accordance with their religious beliefs." Finally, C-38 contains provisions which seek to amend eight federal laws, which, among other things, will include extending legal benefits to same-sex couples which opposite-sex ones currently enjoy.

Canadians have long awaited the introduction of the *Civil Marriage Act* ever since a stream of decisions from provincial and federal high courts began dismissing the traditional definitions of marriage, family and spouse in the 1990s. In 2003, courts of appeal in Ontario and British Columbia ruled that the definition of marriage as the union of a man and a woman violated guarantees of constitutional equality under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (a Canadian version of the U.S. Bill of Rights, if you will). By the time the Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of draft same-

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~ COMMON GROUND ~

### PC FOR THE NEXT GENERATION

New beginnings bring the promises of new ideas and new commitments. It is not often that lasting institutions have the opportunity to truly rejuvenate their mission. Earlier this month, Providence College turned its future over to a new generation of promise with the introduction of its next president, Fr. Brian J. Shanley, O.P.

At long last, our community has taken a direction that seems to value the contributions of those individuals who make this institution viable—the Providence College student body. Fr. Shanley is a welcome addition to the College because of his conviction that the PC community is built upon the engagement of the students. However, Fr. Shanley faces great challenges as our College yearns to join the ranks of Notre Dame, Georgetown, Boston College, and Holy Cross in the pantheon of Catholic institutions committed to higher learning.

Fr. Shanley must follow through on his commitment to the students, as we have become increasingly irrelevant to the outgoing president and others in the administration. The official campus newspaper remains under the direction of the College administration through the Office of Student Services. Student Congress, our elected representatives, cannot legislate independent of administrative involvement. Fr. Shanley must allow the student body to grow into responsible adults and avoid parenting our evolution into the real world.

The College is standing on the brink of greatness. New building projects have propelled the campus toward ensuring a stable future, an accomplishment the outgoing president should be proud of as he leaves Harkins Hall. To continue the institution's push toward further greatness, though, Fr. Shanley cannot shy away from raising the bar for faculty and students alike. He must commit the College to recruiting the best students, encouraging a diverse campus community, and providing students with new opportunities in their fields of study. Without this commitment, we simply cannot compete with other leading Catholic schools for the best and the brightest students and professors.

At 47, Fr. Shanley truly represents a new generation of leadership at Providence College. We salute the Board of Trustees for encouraging a passing of the torch at Providence College.

# Protecting the liberties of the Constitution

Continued from Page One: year may have cost the gay-rights movement years of progress. Many, including myself (an unabashed ally to the gay-rights movement), wished the gay-rights wing of the Democratic Party waited until they had an influential ally somewhere in Washington. But, we must continue to look toward the creation of a new commitment to social equality and fight harder against the intolerable crusade against homosexuality being waged by the Religious Right.

Many claim that same-sex marriages will destroy the traditional family. Our society, though, has never fully embraced the ideals of traditional marriage. Nearly half of all marriages end in divorce—the staggering majority in those states which are so devoutly opposed to the idea of same-sex marriage. A traditional marriage is dependent upon the mutual love and respect of two people who commit their lives to the happiness of one another. Without that love and respect, couples who enter into a legal and/or spiritual bond are making a mockery of the union.

The Bible-Belters (and equally misled Christians) who condemn such unions often base their arguments upon their spiritual beliefs. No proponent of gay-marriage, no matter how supportive they appear to the cause, would ever expect a law to transcend the barriers of Church and State. Individual religions would be free to set their own rules for marriage just as they can today. (The Catholic Church, for example, does not allow its believers to remarry in the Church after a divorce.) But basing a constitutional law on the beliefs of religious doctrines not only blurs the lines of establishment, it flagrantly erases them.

Argue all you like that the gay-marriage opposition is not a religious issue but look at the evidence. The most open opponents to same-sex marriage are conservative organizations with hidden religious agendas:

The Family Research Council (tagline reads, "Defending Family, Faith, and Freedom), Focus on the Family (the lead article on their website last Monday was titled, "Choosing a Religious Home"), Jerry Farwell, the Catholic Church, and the united front of self-labeled Evangelicals that Karl Rove pandered to throughout the 2004 election. Occasionally the Right will solicit a secular opponent to combat the argument that religion is infiltrating our constitution, but that's a political ploy more transparent than placing minorities on stage with a lily-white candidate.

Others will undoubtedly claim that opposing same-sex marriage is not discrimination because marriage does not provide benchmarks benefits of universal civil rights. But it is intrinsically discriminatory on the premise that heterosexuals have access to more than 1,400 governmental benefits through marriage that

are categorically denied to same sex partners. Opposing same-sex marriages opposes the concept of equality that "All men" are entitled to under the premise that denying such a union would hinder one's pursuit to happiness. Our nation has a marred history of institutional discrimination that we have only begun to clean in recent generations. Within our parents' lifetime it was illegal for a black man to marry a white woman, for such a marriage would jeopardize the traditional family. Making this comparison becomes slippery, I'll admit, if one subscribes to the school of thought that marriage is a path toward the raising of children. Marriage, though, is an institution based on mutual love and respect, as I established earlier. If we degenerate the debate of traditional marriage to those that produce children we would be ignoring the happy unions of millions of Americans who choose not to and cannot bear children. So, let's move the debate to the next point.

Enacting a constitutional amendment restricting the rights of

Americans is, well, unconstitutional. It's been done once with the implementation of prohibition. Let me know how that one worked out?

We have amendments that protect the freedoms of speech, no matter how absurd that speech may be. We have an amendment that protects one's right to own a semi-automatic assault rifle despite the alarming numbers of Americans killed by firearms each year. We have an amendment that protects citizens from their own imprisonment. Establishing a constitutional limit on the rights of Americans would be equally insulting to Thomas Jefferson and the Founding Fathers as dropping trough and relieving yourself on the grounds of Monticello.

The idea of same-sex marriage may be revolting to those who fear the image of two dudes holding hands, but per-

sonal preferences of what is and isn't comfortable is a terrible precedent for amending the constitution.

Protecting the freedoms of the constitution—the pursuit of happiness—is a noble endeavor. Equality is above partisan politics. Ensuring that every American has the right to their loved one making medical decisions on their behalf; that every American has access to the secular benefits of marriage; that every American be allowed to love whomever God allowed them to fall in love is the most noble fight to wage.

History will remember those who stood in opposition to the social equality of same-sex marriage with those who fought for the protection of slavery and barricaded the halls of higher education against integration.

What side of history are you on?

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WE HAVE AMENDMENTS THAT PROTECT THE FREEDOMS OF SPEECH, NO MATTER HOW ABSURD THAT SPEECH MAY BE. WE HAVE AN AMENDMENT THAT PROTECTS ONE'S RIGHT TO OWN A SEMI-AUTOMATIC ASSAULT RIFLE DESPITE THE ALARMING NUMBERS OF AMERICANS KILLED BY FIREARMS EACH YEAR. WE HAVE AN AMENDMENT THAT PROTECTS CITIZENS FROM THEIR OWN IMPRISONMENT. ESTABLISHING A CONSTITUTIONAL LIMIT ON THE RIGHTS OF AMERICANS WOULD BE EQUALLY INSULTING TO THOMAS JEFFERSON AND THE FOUNDING FATHERS AS DROPPING TROUGH AND RELIEVING YOURSELF ON THE GROUNDS OF MONTICELLO.

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# Protecting the traditional view of marriage

sex marriage legislation in early December, 2004, more than half of Canada's thirteen provinces and territories had already begun issuing marriage licenses to homosexual couples.

The language used by these courts in their decisions contains profoundly disturbing implications which I will attempt to convey by tackling some of the major arguments put forth by same-sex marriage proponents.

First, those who seek the extension of marriage titles and benefits to homosexuals argue that procreation is not a fundamental characteristic of the union. Indeed, an Ontario court ruled in 2002 that procreation "is becoming an increasingly narrow and shaky footing for the institution of marriage," especially because some heterosexual spouses cannot or do not have children. What's more, they argue, advances in modern technology and the adoption option basically mean that, yes, homosexuals can "have" children.

Such an approach blatantly ignores some important realities. For starters, the majority of married couples *do* have children and by natural means, no less. Truth be told, the state has a vested interest in seeing that they do—that is, the expansion and perpetuation of its population. Though same-sex marriage advocates claim that heterosexual couples will go on having babies, there is evidence in the West that points to the contrary. Birth rates in Canada and much of Western Europe are on the decline due to decades of liberalizing laws on divorce and human reproduction. Opening the door to same-sex marriage and liberalizing standards even further defies prudence under these circumstances.

But, perhaps an even more destructive undertone to the de-emphasis on procreation for marriage is the equation of artificial conception with natural conception. By claiming that reproductive technologies allow homosexual couples to "have" children just like heterosexual ones do, the courts have set a disturbing precedent. Ironically, in order to recognize the intimacy of relations between homosexuals they are willing to ignore and degrade the intimacy involved in natural conception by equating it with what goes on in a petri dish.

Along those lines, the courts have demonstrated that they are at peace with children growing up in an environment which distorts their perception of personhood. To quote one same-sex marriage opponent, "A child raised by his natural parents lives in the presence of his origins. Those who live with adoptive mothers and fathers see a reflection of their origins; those who live with two men or two women see only a partial, incomplete reflection." In the view of the Canadian judiciary, such piecemeal self-knowledge is not at all disagreeable.

So, if not procreation, then what constitutes the foundation of marriage? Essentially, the courts' message has been that marriage is predicated upon sexual preference. In a 1993 decision, Supreme Court justices acknowledged "the range of human preferences and possibilities" when it comes to sexuality and lifestyle. The judiciary seems to have subscribed to the proponents' philosophy that marriage is purely a matter of personal choice. As the same-sex marriage advocate E.J. Graff claims, "each individual should—no, *must*—be free to choose his or her life course

rather than following a path laid out by tradition."

What's more, she and the courts believe that excluding same-sex couples from marital recognition is an affront to their dignity. It rejects their personal aspirations and implies that they lack the ability to form loving and lasting relationships, and that one form of relationship is more important than another.

The defenders of traditional marriage have duly noted the obvious flaw in these commonly heard arguments. If constitutional rights, including those pertaining to marriage, are derived from purely subjective notions of what one is entitled to, then the social order would collapse. More importantly, the argument for equal recognition of sexual preferences—and the courts' acceptance of it—paves the way for every type of sexual relationship to be included under the definition of marriage. If personal sexual choice and not procreation is the primary prerequisite, and technology can crank out babies if need be, on what grounds would the courts deny marriage licenses to three (or thirteen or thirty) consenting adults who've professed their mutual love? Or to a senior citizen and a minor? To a man and his best friend—of the canine breed? To a brother and his sister?

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## ACCOMMODATING HOMOSEXUALS UNDER THE UMBRELLA OF MARRIAGE IS NOT ONLY IMPRACTICAL, BUT DETRIMENTAL TO OUR UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HUMAN IN THE MOST FUNDAMENTAL SENSE OF THE WORD.

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Call it far-fetched, but the passage of Bill C-38 lays the foundation for precisely this scenario. The truth of the matter is that society must show favor when it comes to marriage, just as it discriminates—in the most basic sense of the word—in other situations. Only veterans qualify for veterans' benefits; only students with financial difficulties qualify for federal need-based grants. Similarly, only a man and a woman qualify for marriage.

Our existence as a society and as a species has always depended upon traditional marriage; it simply does not and cannot depend upon same-sex relationships. A child's development is cultivated by mothers and fathers in ways that are exclusive to them and most beneficial for the child's social and emotional well-being, as well as his sense of identity. Through the parents' intercourse and example, the fullest truths about human personhood are made manifest. The law must therefore recognize that our greatest interests are contingent upon the union of a man and a woman and, yes, it must show preference for this type of relationship.

The Canadian *Civil Marriage Act* should serve as a loud wake-up call for society to devote more energy to strengthening the institution of marriage and the counseling of men and women who seek to enter into it. As a noted gay writer has observed, "straights have done more damage to marriage than gays." Divorce rates and TV shows in which spouses are treated as commodities seem to vindicate his claim.

And yet, even though those for whom marriage is intended do not always get it right, it is intended for them alone nonetheless. Though one may fail to bring about the fulfillment of an entity's purpose, the failure doesn't necessitate altering the essence of that entity. Marriage has a particular design, purpose and meaning. Rather than eroding them by admitting homosexuals, we should look to rescue and strengthen marriage before the damage becomes irreparable.

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For more information on defending traditional marriage, go to <http://www.ensbrinemarriage.ca>

# Saving Social Security for our future

BY: THE RIGHT

In recent years the controversial topic of reforming social security has been referred to as the third rail of American politics, you touch it and you die, at least politically. Well, it appears that all we needed was someone to come along with a pair of rubber gloves, because President Bush has just grabbed on with both hands. Of course, Democrats are unwilling to take this chance for fear of actually supporting the President on anything.

Before I explain this rather harsh accusation, I will first look at why this issue is so important, especially to our generation. Today our grandparents live off of the money they have saved up throughout their lives, as well as from the money they receive from the social security fund each month. Soon many of our parents will be collecting from this fund and in about fifty years so will we. That is why a certain percentage is taken out of our paychecks each week, whether it is a job on campus, or waiting tables over the summer. However, this fund may not last long enough for us to see the benefits of all the money we are putting into it. As seniors are living longer and couples are having fewer children there are fewer people working and paying taxes to fund the social security system and more people taking money out of that system to live on.

This is why the Bush administration has laid out a plan to reform the existing social security system. Nothing is set in stone and the President is open to hearing all possible solutions, although he does believe that allowing people to set up private accounts is the way to go. This would allow people to voluntarily take some of the money they would normally pay into social security through taxes and invest it privately. Not only would this allow people to keep more of their own money rather than

pay it into a system that will eventually go bankrupt, but it would also allow them to gain a higher interest rate on their money, higher than anything that the current government fund can provide. Such a reform will cost great amounts of money, but our options are either to pay that large amount now and fix the problem, or not do anything and have to spend a far greater amount sometime in the future when our retirement money is at stake.

The reason why I accuse the Democrats of being afraid of supporting President Bush is due to the fact that former President Bill Clinton identified social security as a crisis under his administration. However, today many Democrats would have us believe that there is no problem with the current system and that President Bush is using scare tactics to gain support for his reform plan. In addition one of the President's strongest opponents in Congress, Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV), claimed in a 1999 news interview that he would support a privatization plan similar to the President's to reform social security, but now says that he would never allow such a plan. So, which is it? Has the Senator simply changed his mind or is he afraid that the Bush administration might be successful and solve a problem that he and his fellow Democrats were unable to solve?

Whether Democrats want to admit it or not, social security is in trouble and if something is not done to address this problem the system will eventually go bankrupt. The formation of this system was a great success of the Democratic Party under FDR that has allowed generations of Americans to live out the twilight of their lives in dignity. However, as times change, we must be willing to change with them. We must honor past successes and avoid future failures. This means that we must be willing to take chances, work together, and not worry about who gets the credit for solving problems.

# Dean will fix McAuliffe's train wreck

BY: THE LEFT

Since drinking myself into denial on Election Night, I have been getting into screaming matches with my fellow Democratic friends through the channels of the blogosphere. It appears, to use the latest cliché of the blog, my partisan allies have been "drinking the Kool-Aid" of the Democratic Leadership Council. Moderation may be a virtue of Aristotelian happiness, but it is the sign of apathetic weakness in the world of partisan politics.

It appears that the sexy appeal of indecision is slowly dissolving within the Democratic National Committee and it's about damn time. The two year rollercoaster of Howard Dean's journey from irrelevance to front-runner to late-night headliner has risen to the heights of the Party. Conservatives are ecstatic. A Republican friend of mine couldn't hide his glee at the prospect of Dean's unorthodox style. The conservatives, though, don't realize that Dean's organizing and fundraising will bring the DNC back into relevance in Arizona, New Mexico, South Carolina, Florida, Iowa, ... OK, I couldn't resist.

Howard Dean is the man for the job, especially after the train wreck that out-going Party boss Terry McAuliffe has left for the Party. Dean did not lose the Democratic nomination for running a poor grassroots campaign; he lost because he couldn't stay on script. He brings the philosophy of empowerment to the Party that kept him in the race through the Wisconsin primary last year.

Dean is capable of organizing and retaining supporters. His

strategy to make the DNC a national alliance of local parties will allow the Party to identify their members, talk to their members, and keep their members on board. Moreover, by bringing the smaller organizations together, Dean sees the valuable asset of a local influence in national strategizing. The voices of state chairs and county organizers will never be muffled under the strong-arming pressure of the distanced knowledge of the DSCC and DCCC.

Critics will continue to whine that Dean will pull the party to the left and alienate moderate and conservative blue collar families in the Red States. The critics forget, though, that Dean was able to rally the working poor early in his run for the White House by talking about the issues all Americans can relate to—the economy, education, health care, and foreign policy. Maybe the Party will lose several elections it could have won by redirecting the language of debate, but I can't help but to ask what is the virtue of electing Republican ideas under the title of a Democrat?

When we begin talking to Americans as people who work on farms and in factories and in offices and on the highways we will begin to see the country as more than Red and Blue. Howard Dean knows the importance of talking to Americans like they are Americans. He did it for most of 2002 and 2003. Had he not lost sight of that common ground of Americana the DNC would never have had to put the debate of its future on the threads of amateur blogs.

## SHORT TAKES

**From rhetoric to results: why Bush's State of the Union holds weight** No doubt the words "hot air" were running through the heads of certain audience members as President Bush delivered his State of the Union address. Sure, the custom of America's chief executive greeting a joint session of Congress and extending his challenges, invitations and thanks is a hallowed and ceremonial one. But, its chances of degenerating into a self-congratulatory festival of applause devoid of any original substance or flavor always seem to be rather high, so why would 2005 be any different?

At first glance, it wasn't. Lengthy ovations from zealous spectators and a seemingly endless stream of pledges from the president may have given the proceedings an appearance of redundancy and pretentiousness. However, a cursory examination glosses over some important truths which, once fully comprehended and appreciated, cast Bush's State of the Union in an entirely different light. The reality of the situation was this—legislators in the House chamber and attentive citizens of the country were presented with a political agenda from a president whose track record after one term in office is nothing short of exceptional.

It's easy to dismiss the ambitious promises of someone who can't back them up, this president boasts a record which reflects an unusual degree of success in tackling politically risky challenges and producing major results, like the following: the No Child Left Behind Act, which overhauled much of the country's education system; the refusal to allocate federal funds for stem-cell research requiring further destruction of embryos; a ban on partial birth abortion; comprehensive tax relief; and, the first voluntary prescription drug benefit in the history of Medicare—an exploit which eluded every one of his predecessors who attempted the same.

In matters of national security and foreign policy, Bush has also made enormous strides, consolidating 22 different government agencies into the Department of Homeland Security, reforming the intelligence community through implementation of the 9/11 Commission's proposals, ousting the Taliban and Saddam Hussein, and supporting landmark elections in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Of course, we won't pretend that President Bush's initiatives have not met their fair share of setbacks and scrutiny. Though the demand for Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid expenditures is at an all time high and military campaigns are still being waged overseas, the president must assume some responsibility for the record deficits logged in the last four years. The State of the Union lines which demanded fiscal restraint and that "Taxpayer dollars must be spent wisely, or not at all" should be foremost on Bush's mind the next time inconsequential expenditures are pending his approval. Similarly, considering the lofty status of freedom in the president's remarks, he might do well to revisit some of his policies on granting detainees in Guantanamo Bay fair and expeditious prosecution, and to pressure wayward partners—Russia, China and Saudi Arabia spring to mind—to drastically curb human rights abuses within their own borders.

Though such shortcomings are serious and merit equally serious attention, they are exceptions to what is otherwise an impressive record for the Bush administration. Let us not forget that this record is bolstered by outstanding electoral feats, including gains in each house of Congress in both national elections since 2000, and a sweep of the popular vote and the Electoral College in 2004. In short, the president has revealed an extraordinary gift for accumulating political capital in the form of electoral mandates since first taking office.

Mindful of Bush's impressive legislative and electoral records as he begins his second term, we should expect him to spend this capital in equally ambitious ways and to produce equal, if not greater, results. While you may criticize these results or attribute the president's record to the skills of his allies on Capitol Hill, there's nothing to suggest that the president will shy away from reforming Social Security, medical liability, immigration and federal tax laws, while strengthening our energy supplies and improving our health care. You may not buy the rhetoric, but the record of results is a sure sell. - **THE RIGHT**

**Unclg politics before the Plumbers bill us.** Politics should not be a dirty word in a democracy that is reliant on the general population for guidance. Recent actions, though, by Maryland Republicans have marred the institution of our governance.

Last week, rumors regarding Baltimore Mayor Martin O'Malley's (D.) sex life surfaced through postings on a conservative website. The man responsible for throwing mud around the Free State was on the State payroll and a personal ally to Republican Gov. Robert Ehrlich. While Ehrlich has distanced himself from the charges of conspiracy, he has been indicted by public opinion for assassinating the character of his likely challenger in next year's gubernatorial election.

O'Malley denied the charges and Democrats from across the state—even those who have pledged their support in a Party primary with O'Malley's chief Democratic rival—have called for an investigation into the Governor's involvement with the accusations.

Such partisan backery holds no place in the honest work of governing the people, but Republicans continue to hold their marks as excellent character assassins. What began with an ill-sought crusade against Bill Clinton's personal life (to the sound of \$30 million of tax-payer money), snowballed through Republican circles. Max Cleland (D. - GA) was attacked for being an enemy to the United States. Yet, Cleland served his nation honorably in Vietnam, where he left both his legs and an arm behind.

The concept of bi-partisan chivalry is devoid on the GOP, as they attacked the Democratic Senate Leader in last year's election with a dirty smear campaign that distorted Tom Daschle's Senate record. But, the GOP was able to win Cleland's seat and they successfully ousted Daschle. They also prevailed in impeaching Clinton before cooler heads of reason prevailed in the Senate.

The attacks on O'Malley may be the independent work of a rogue political hack. The measures of "winning" however, are hurting the country more than the noise-pollution of *Crossfire*. While politics is an ugly game, the Republican Party cannot continue to lead our nation down the path of personal vindication. It may appear as only a minor issue from a small Mid-Atlantic state but the tradition of "Rat-F\*\*ing" that the GOP started with Watergate will continue to pollute the arena of government until someone mans-up to the costliness of the GOP Plumbers. - **THE LEFT**

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*Black & White* is an independent political journal written, edited, and published by students at Providence College. The views in this publication are in no way the universal views of the College, its students, or its alumni . . . but we hope we can ruffle your feathers just a little bit.

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# WORDS FROM THE BLOG:

## The predictable predicament of the opposition

*Re: Short Takes, The State of the Union:*

I love reading the Left's predictable reaction whenever Republicans talk Social Security, with so many daily changes in our world, it's something consistent I can cling to. Even uttering the 'S' word and "reform" in the same breath sends liberals into convulsions. Now, I don't pretend to be a political guru; I'm just going to throw out some random brain droppings on the Left's perspective and see if any of them find a target...

... "Social Security was never intended to be the sole means of retirement funds, but rather it was to act as a safety net for those without the means to retire comfortably." Couldn't agree more. So, if it was never intended to be one's sole cash cow on retirement, and if we'd like to divert our cash somewhere else on the off-chance we can get a better return, why shouldn't the government provide us the opportunity to do so?...

... "Let us not forget the unprecedented risk of committing our fund—a fund each of us has already paid into—to the whims of the stock market," a truly legitimate question. Good heavens, thought I might not find one in here. But I digress (apart from the fact that if we were allowed to invest privately, it's not "the fund we've already paid into" that we're risking, just our own investment. Whatever we put into Social Security would be a completely separate issue, accumulating interest under the old rules). However, as any investment advisor can tell you, there are varying degrees of risk. Some funds give you a small but historically guaranteed rate of return; others offer higher returns but admittedly higher risks, more subject to the whims of the stock market. Good investors usually get a variety of funds: some guaranteed so they still have a nest-egg should the market tank, but others riskier so that they can potentially reap greater rewards than the government could ever offer them. Why should younger workers be denied the opportunity to make these choices?...

... If the Democrats don't want to find themselves on the wrong side of history, they should look for ways to address the system's looming problems, rather than pretend that there is no burglar, and oh, by the way, the sound of breaking glass downstairs is just the hot air gushing from Howard Dean's lungs.—  
**Anonymous Posting**

## The myths of a mandate

*Re: Short Takes, The State of the Union*

It's bizarre to call the 2004 election effort a "success" for Bush. Despite having the advantage of incumbency, Bush received just under 51 percent of the popular vote and won re-election by one single state, the most narrow win for a sitting President in history. In the House of Representatives, the Democrats would have actually gained a seat had it not been for Tom DeLay's illegal redistricting effort in Texas. In Governor's races, there was no change. Statehouses across the country are now split evenly between the two parties, and Democrats have a majority in regards to overall number of state legislators. The GOP's only strong victory came

in the United States Senate...

You mention several "successes" of the Bush administration. There's No Child Left Behind, whose extreme standards have resulted in major sanctions for schools across the nation, including some in my hometown, which boasts one of the best school systems in the country (Charlottesville High School, which is consistently ranked amongst the nation's top 100 high schools, is about to fail under NCLB). And if that weren't enough, the government isn't funding its own initiative, making it literally impossible for many schools to meet the program's requirements...

... Then there's the war in Iraq. Let's see, how did that one go? They had weapons of mass destruction, and then they didn't. They could attack us at any time, but that turned out not to be true. We were told that Iraq and al Qaeda were inextricably linked, and that Iraq was behind the 9/11 attacks, both of which turned out to be completely false, except that the war has created a new safe haven for al Qaeda after they had not had a sympathetic government to provide a safe haven. We toppled a leader that

posed no threat to the United States and a regime that, though horrible, was no worse than many regimes across the world that we actually support. And in the process, we have spent hundreds of billions of dollars (with Bush lately asking for even more), lost over 1,500 coalition lives, with thousands of others maimed, and killed over 100,000 civilian lives, an amount that is equivalent to more than twice the population of

Rhode Island (based on respective populations). Meanwhile, despite a joke of an election, insurgent violence rages on, and the current administration rhetoric is strikingly similar to the pre-Iraq war rhetoric, although this time it is directed towards Iran.

Meanwhile, the GOP has forced their morality on several fronts onto the American public. They have given millions to the drug industry and are about to give millions to Wall Street. His economic policy is weakening the American dollar abroad, which economists tell me is very, very bad. His tax cuts went mostly to the upper class, and whatever cuts the middle and lower class received has been more than made up for in rising property taxes and sales taxes on the local and state level. Dick Cheney's former (and future) company has gotten rich off the Iraq war, and meanwhile, abortion, teen pregnancy, teen sex, teen STD's and divorce have all risen under Bush's term.—  
**Dan Kachur, President Providence College Democrats**

## Democracy can be a bitch

*Re: Short Takes, The Iraqi Elections*

The most powerful nation that has ever graced the face of this planet has proved that, under the tracks of tanks, the barrels of M-16s, and the open doors of B-2 bombers, we can successfully distribute plastic boxes, make people put marked pieces of paper in said boxes, and get them counted. For one day. We have successfully proven that we are capable of conquering a nation still teetering on the brink of the Middle Ages and forcing our mechanism of government on our humbled foe. Congratulations are in order... Or are they? —**Keith Carr**

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